

## Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen... by Aerine

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Eventual Smut, Explicit Language, Explicit Sexual Content, F/M, Wrote this on a whim like all my other fanfics lmao, a motherly relationship between Eleven and the Reader, may or not be in chronological order no idea what I am doing

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Reader

**Relationships:** Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Jim "Chief" Hopper/You

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**Summary:**

Your favorite past times are bar hopping in search of different ways to get you drunk, nights with the lone wolf sheriff of Hawkins, Indiana, and becoming greatly awestruck over the powers of one mysterious little girl.

Jane has no idea what any of that means.

Or, in other words, a series of drabbles regarding you, the lovely Jane, and the less than lovely Jim Hopper.

# 1. Honey, I'm Home!

## Author's Note:

Jim Hopper has you wrapped around his finger... and eventually, so will this girl.

Nothing interesting, worth losing sleep over happened in Hawkins, Indiana. Despite wishing of stranger things to transpire throughout your dull life, your idea of fun and entertainment was found inside the nearest bar, throwing your head back as the poison burned your throat. Such unhealthy behavior it was, but it was a blast from the past for you—a reminiscence of a city that never slept, this being no different. The rebel in you found satisfaction in searching for trouble with a radio that certainly did not belong to you in your grasp, an inch of abnormality sending a chill up your spine.

Your heart ached for whatever was out there, the sun beginning to rise with your boredom, hands wrapping the fleece throw you *borrowed* from your boyfriend... sex buddy... *lover* closer to your figure in hopes of battling the cold. The marigold hues filtered through the branches across the lake, leaves swaying slightly with the bitter December breeze, yet the waters before you were ever still. The birds, the same birds you imagined shit on your shared trailer windows every morning, passed you with the same mundane tune, the same boring noise. Perhaps a fraction of you wanted to perish, to be cursed with frostbite after the consequences of your afternoon hit you, since that was loads better than repeating the same actions every morning... the beautiful sight was suddenly not so beautiful any longer.

The ever so gruff Jim Hopper was out the door before dawn, leaving behind your naïve form underneath the blankets, the only charming aspect of your life the anticipation of when your eyes would align with his again. The sun would fall behind the extravagant trees, the spotlight on your pathetic form and what in all realms of possibility were unrequited feelings. A fool you were, a woman who fell so easily even if no one could catch you. You trailed behind that alluring aura of his, attracted to his lone wolf attitude, ignoring the what ifs for one more night with him... oh yeah, and the sex was

*great.*

Something about his less than fit figure, the stomach he hid by pulling at the uniform he tucked in his jeans, or his scruffy beard his past lovers whined about drove you to lengths you never imagined for a man. You preferred those facts to remain behind closed doors, just like the relationship (or lack thereof) with the town sheriff. As much as everyone should know that you were semi-dating—having a key to his residence, fucking as a source for stress relief, same thing—the man you sought after for years, the response to that was clear to you both once you first stepped foot in his lakeside trailer. No one would. The fact that you were sworn to secrecy was the only interesting aspect of your life you were going to get.

Yet the Lord worked in mysterious ways, a faint ring beyond the curtains behind you—just before you eventually died of boredom. A doorbell in need of fixing, the sound was small, pathetic, and was nothing compared to the birds chirping along the sea. The hint of noise blended with the extraordinary scene before you, your long and suffering sigh a nuisance for who was beyond your front door. The hard knock, impatient and never wavering, was what forced a response from you; yes, perhaps a break from your routine was to be your belated Christmas gift... *no*, whoever disrupted the static in your life better have had a worthwhile reason to do so.

You slowly rose from your seat, prickly arms wrapped around your body as it pushed up at your chest. The tension rolled back your shoulders, the bitter January breeze nipping at your bare toes and fingers. Your hand grabbed a tuft of the teal cloth shielding your humble abode from the harsh winter, pulling it aside to enter the comfortability of familiarity. The knocking showed no signs of ceasing, a rhythm of three hard knocks, then two in rapid succession, silence, and repeating as if nothing will force you to listen more than a beat to drive you insane. Clearly, no one cared to irritate you so much other than the man himself.

“Hop, I *swear*,” you *swore*, “Once is enough but three fu—”

Your digits rubbed at your temple, a faint pulse throbbing in your brain at Jim Hopper’s sheer willingness to annoy you. Rearing your arm back, you prepared to let the man know of his *audacity* to come

home—one *hundred and thirty-seven minutes* after he placed that hat on his head, you counted—and allow excitement to course through your veins because you could finally act like there was a resonance between you of shared gazes and thumping hearts. How dare he.

However, that opportunity was taken from you when your eyes found oak brown, his form towering above you as if he knew of the affect he held over you. You fiddled with the lapels of his uniform collar, hands shaking as if sharing his unease. You found him in his vulnerability, tilting your head for answers only to find... a girl. A glimpse of shaggy strands sat on top of her head, leaning towards a buzzcut unnatural for a girl her age. Dirt was caked atop her pale, snow white skin, patches of her blue plaid shirt—certainly one you had seen before—painted with dried blood that broke your already cracked heart.

Your name left the sheriff's lips, forcing your attention back to him.

“We gotta go.”

The man caused narrowed eyes wherever he went, puzzling you with his short phrases and his actions. You found yourself wishing at times you could understand his reasoning, once again leaving you lost in the fearful unknown, the hands of the clock moving slower in the night by your worrying... but now you would spare the trivialities. The nerve of him to whisk you away so early in the morning, his gruff words placing you under a trance. How could he assume you would follow him so easily, the *dumb fuck idiot*—

You nodded, fast and assuredly. “Okay... okay.”

## 2. Relationship Advice 101

### Summary for the Chapter:

Your life is full of bad choices.

### Notes for the Chapter:

Thank you all for reading! Hope you enjoy this second chapter/drabble :)

Karen Wheeler was a woman who strived for success. Well past her prime, she had struck gold within the idea of white picket fences and middle-class wealth. Of course the best place to look was a man with a well-paying job, his behind sitting on a pile of cash—compiled up in hundreds, you imagined—due to his hard work, dedication, and the fortune of being a part of a supposedly superior race. Now Ted Wheeler, arguably an airhead, fell in love with Karen's youthful appearance and reckless demeanor and snatched her from the life of trivialities to fulfill a family society desired... and that was where her three children Nancy, Michael, and Holly came in.

That was Karen Wheeler in a nutshell.

You did not like Karen Wheeler.

However, she opened her home to you on the worst of nights, coddling you like a lost, lovesick teenager because your love life was a sham. She would reach up and shuffle around for the coffee grounds in her cabinet along with the container of sugar that would surely be gone by the time you left, providing you that warmth the cruel man couldn't give you. *A shitload of cream* was the curt remind out of you, the blur of your unconsciousness fogging up any filter you thought you had, and your nose scrunched up as if about ready to follow the tears prepared to streak down your face. Those were your worst of nights, because the scent of those coffee grounds would reach your nostrils and your heart would ache because somehow the bitter fuel tasted like heaven only when Jim Hopper himself opened those pearly gates... and you would shut down all over again.

Somehow Karen saw fit to chime in with advice here and there, chiding your broken form with quotes from a fantasy novel—a romance plot you doubted she would ever live, yet no one was to know of your own thoughts but *you*—and the attempts made to comfort a friend who didn't know the path their life was leading them was futile. Perhaps a fraction of you longed for those words of warning, a tone pitiful of a friend in unrequited love, pulling a body overwhelmed with exhaustion into Karen's long and spacious driveway in hopes of saving. There were few times where she had ignored your cry for help, her lips tugging into a frown but eventually willing her hands to invite you to her suburban household. It was either that or losing a valuable bill in her wallet after a night out drinking, one she never remembered but still suffered with the effects nonetheless.

This time, you figured, would be no different, except no words could escape you regarding your morning. *Your* morning, you wished it was, but the addition of another threatened to ruin the balance you deceived yourself into existing. It was quite a predicament you found yourself in the middle of, attempting to comprehend the notion of Jim Hopper, a man who found the answer to sweet release in the nearest fool of a woman, opening his cabin to not just you but a child slowly blossoming into adulthood. She also happened to refuse to speak more than a few words at a time when conversing with you, which is why you refused to call her a preteen until she acted like one. It wouldn't surprise you in the slightest if your irritation was reason for her mere existence, and every fiber of your being would believe that to be true until the day you left this Earth you assured.

All you could do was throw your head up high at the toddler babbling nonsense at you in her high chair, eyes wide like nothing in the world was as interesting as your issues, and pray she wouldn't end up like this girl. “Sup, Holly,” you said, and it was quite fitting to reach for her attention considering her own mother couldn't will her interest in you out of her. In such a mundane household where life hadn't begun for her yet, where worries of love and strife were of distant thoughts, watching the tears and snot she would have already picked from her nose run down your face was amusing. Something about your suffering was entertainment to kids you supposed.

The blonde halted in pulling at her twin ponytails, opening her palm to wave at you. At least she gave you that.

“A shitshow—” *A shitshow, that’s what my life is. You can buy bootlegs for it in some dark back alley,* was what you wanted to say, but a sudden gasp left your fellow adult as she narrowed her eyes at your impudence. Scoffing at your cheeky behavior, she reminded you of your faults and complemented your mischievous grin with a frown. Upon your vulgar vocabulary, the mother of three wasted no time in shoving the carrot puree against her youngest daughters’ taste buds, banishing the thought of such words from the little girl’s head with acquired taste. Never again would you corrupt the naivety of this child with adulthood, which was a shame because Holly was quite the listener.

Showing up uninvited at the Wheeler household was always a common occurrence from you, yet snow boots you recognized as Mike and Nancy’s sat beside the door untouched. Streaks of coalescing colors among the spectrum spread along the floor, the sun providing that existential warmth in case the winter proved too cold. Never have you needed relationship advice before the children left for school, instead of when the moon rose to its highest and the day was mere minutes away from ending. Your appearance would have proven bothersome, except earlier events left you in a cluster of emotions you could not describe, and you threw away the possibility of interrupting what upper middle-class life must have been like for some clarification of where your life was leading you.

“So, um... remember when I told you about the guy I was sort of... *kind of* with?” Karen found you at the corner of her eye, waiting for your riveting continuation. “Well... he brought a kid.”

Judging by her reaction, you concluded that it would have been better to seek solace in a beer bottle.

### 3. You, the Enigma

#### Summary for the Chapter:

A not so lovely you in the eyes of an oh so lovely Jane.

In better terms, you are the worst example of a normal human being.

Jane—Eleven, but the normalcy in you failed to become aware of her second life—did not have to look far in the realms of entertainment, even if her life abruptly ended beyond the translucent glass windows. Hawkins' arcade, far past bare trees and fading footsteps, was nothing but an object mentioned in passing. Jane's gaze would align with the empty ones of Barbie dolls, her thumb caressing the soft strands of blonde hair that she didn't share with the toy, yet her life had never known bringing two dolls together for a kiss or building a life for them so ideal and different from hers. No one allowed her the chance to cut her doll's hair to unspeakable lengths, or to pull their heads from their petite bodies because nothing was as amusing than to ruin a doll's gorgeous looks.

"Oh, *fuck you!* Girls do it all the time!"

"So, you're telling me nothing about this—" A doll laying around, one you mutilated yourself, was picked up from your dear partner. "Is a little strange to you?"

Jane thought she could figure the type of person you were based on your quirks; one of them happened to be an interest in pulling the hairs from doll's heads and throwing their clothes to the side so they would remain bare forever. To you, it was a temptation you could never shake off despite your immaturity slowly dwindling as life caught up to you. You would recall faintly of instances where you smacked one doll against another when no one ridiculed you for your imagination and rather embraced you for the devious, creative child you were. Jane, ever the naive one, was unaware of the odd desires children would have; the only inkling she had to question your hobby was her caretakers utter concern for an adult that still reverted to her



tendencies every now and then.

You were quite the entertainment, even if you frequently dumbfounded Jane with your lively and eccentric behavior. Your youthful appearance mirrored that, wrinkles only forming upon unbearable stress, and the teen's favorite pastime became observing the reactions elicited from you as you performed with reckless abandon. For example, your grin was at its brightest when around Jim Hopper, hands grasping at the other in hopes of not revealing the trembling of your fingers. A frown would tug on your lips upon anticipation of when the sheriff of Hawkins would be home, arms crossed over the other as you murmured the less than kind words he would have the pleasure of listening to once he reached the warmth of his cabin. Why tears ran down your face at times was a mystery to her, considering nothing ever inflicted you but the path you put yourself on—life catching up to you was to be your worst enemy—except Jane was a smart girl and putting two and two together led her to this conclusion: you clearly weren't yourself.

Clearly. "Hop, no one ever asked *me* to the dance!"

An exasperated reminder from your lover that the context of your words was from more than twenty years ago only caused unintelligible sobs to escape you, the man gripping at your side as the both of you embraced the comfort and familiarity of your new home—if you could even call it that. Only two weeks passed since the three of you wished away cobwebs from corners of walls and chased dust bunnies along the wooden floors, and already Jane was taught a word that would prove useful in this situation: ugly. Admittedly, the word brought out a faint chuckle from the girl, since no better word was to describe your expression at that time. Observing you curled up against the toilet bowl as you puked out microwavable vegetables the next morning was not so amusing, however.

There was an indisputable fact to you despite that; you were *pretty*, as Mike called her once. Your smile pulled at your cheeks, an air surrounding your lips that screamed kissable, not that Jane would know. Your hair accentuated your complexion, and it delighted the girl whenever you reached down for a hair tie you found somewhere and tied your hair up into a bun. Hairs never staying in place, you occasionally twirled at the strands of unruly hair whenever you were

feeling bored. Somehow Hopper's hands would find your waist when he was feeling charitable, digits tracing the lines imprinted in your skin. Jane would imagine the pink dress Mike borrowed from his sister falling a little above your knees, embracing your hips and complementing your unpleasant attitude with an innocence no one would expect from you. If there was a word to describe *more than pretty*, perhaps that was it.

Becoming used to you was difficult enough because no child could live up to your immaturity, but what made matters worse was that she would find your eyes narrowing at her petite figure every now and then. One sided conversations eventually fell into silence upon Jim Hopper's leave, either with you too occupied with corny game shows or her locking herself into her room doing God knows what. The girl often would cock her head and share the crease between your eyebrows at your actions even if you hadn't nudged yourself into her select group trustworthy people just yet; somehow everything about you *had* to be important if you were around. It was one emotion from you she couldn't understand, and despite asking, her own words would sound so foreign to her that dropping the topic would be her next course of action.

In the eyes of Jane... or Eleven, you were an enigma. You were a puzzle she couldn't solve, and a mystery with no clues. However, when she slammed her bedroom door in your face with nothing but a bloody nose and the willpower to be separated from your anger, there was one emotion she could decipher from you. The furrowed brows and the squint of your eyes said it all. A universal emotion it was, one that even the most intelligent of people were faced with.

Confusion.

"Oh," was all you had to say to that ordeal.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

\*Fixed a minor issue! Reader is younger than Hopper, but not THAT younger!

## 4. Best Kept Secret

### Summary for the Chapter:

Your immaturity as well as Jane's don't mix well in a Hopper household.

"I can be quiet," was what you said.

"Hop, she won't know," was what you promised.

Before he could voice his opposing argument, remind you of the bullshit behind your words, your trembling hands cupped his cheeks and brought him against your wet lips. The hairs growing atop his jaw teased the lines of your fingers, and you swallowed the giggle down your throat as he leaned into you and intended to finish what you started. Your cot, one you shared with the man, sunk under the weight as a faint whine escaped the confinements of your mattress, except you were too engrossed with the man above you that Jane could walk in and you still wouldn't bring yourself to halt in your temptations. Never would you stop, for you cherished the seconds passed with him so vulnerable against you, and you made that quite clear once you trailed your hand down his body to palm at the tent in his trousers.

"Fuck." His breath, the strong scent of bitter, black coffee, melded with your own. "You *really* wanna do that?"

Something about the curve of lips drove you to lengths you thought unacceptable, and you bit your lip in response. Continuing your ministrations, you proved your point by never averting your gaze from the vast oceans in his eyes, stroking his eager member as it ached and pleaded for you. Low grunts poured from his pursed lips—for once those same lips weren't pressed together in distaste for your behavior—and you felt your hand burn with the friction rapidly forming. It would be more appropriate to say you felt as if your whole body was slathered in gasoline, a match alighting your skin, as the noticeable drops of sweat were a contradiction to the snow piled atop of bare twigs and tree branches. Somehow, you desired for all of you to be consumed in the flames, bare as you crumbled into ash in

the embrace of this man.

With your hands clutching at the hem of your striped crop top—fashion, nowadays, and no one questioned your age with your sense of style—your hair grew unruly as you threw the barrier between the two of you aside. Strands straying from its place, your hand swiped the remaining tufts of hair to the side to reveal the soft, faintly bruised skin of your neck. You were aroused by the possibility of choosing turtlenecks for the next week, the chance of having to use copious amounts of concealer to hide your escapades from others. His lips fit that same spot, near the juncture above your shoulder, so perfectly that it was so damn sinful that you wanted more of him. Wishful thinking would drive you forward, committing you into performing acts that damaged you ever so slowly.

So you immediately rewarded yourself with a pat on the back when Jane cracked open the door to your bedroom when you were in the midst of pulling at his belt; any less self-control and she would have been blessed with a lot more than your breasts. Smacking your palm to your face, you murmured words beyond her vocabulary, your hand finding the shoulder of Jim Hopper's in his embarrassment and sexual frustration. The teenager's cheeks were brushed with a baby pink, past experiences leading her to assume she had done something wrong; she was forced to change into that pretty pink dress of Nancy's away from the boys naïve and mischievous gazes once, so now she had always done so even if another woman was in her presence. As a result, she was unable to complete what she had barged in for, nor remember—something about your fashion sense, but seeing what you hid underneath was highly unexpected.

"Never mind." Ah, yes, another phrase she learned from the man of the household. Apparently, a trait she inherited from him was to look for an escape route to any awkward situation, as she immediately backed away from behind the door and closed it behind her. Somehow you could see Jim Hopper's wall guarding him from pain and the misfortunes of love mirrored in this little girl, her face unreadable to you, which most certainly meant there would be no mentions of what transpired so as long as Hopper let you into his humble abode, right? This situation would be a warning, one so easily forgotten through time, and surely Jane would forget of one of

her first impressions of you, you were sure of it.

Wrong.

“So, um... that.” Jane mimicked the discomfort in your definition of *that*. “That’s... something for adults. It’s a secret.”

Ever the inquisitive one, she continued. “A secret? What is a secret?” Somehow, her gaze never strayed far from your complexion, scrutinizing every bit of you that you despised. Her chocolate brown eyes found yours in an attempt to will every answer from you, only shuffling once to the man whose discomfort was revealed through the right angle of a bright, dandelion hue of the lamp set on the wall. She desired to expand what little words she knew, and she must have thought an idiot like *you* would be the perfect teacher; perhaps there was a possibility of that, yet you never were one to explain the concept of sex... you just enjoyed it.

Watching you in bliss that time allowed her to imagine of a distant future, perhaps one where her and Mike partake in the same love, and she grew confident in her next words as she sat beside you on the couch: *Pretty*. You would have been quite flattered, children usually laughed in your face and forced you to be ugly, except Jane was much too young to consider you pretty in such a state. There was an innocent air that you could never quite match, one otherworldly for a child her age, and you shook your head profusely and desired a future where she never said that ever again. You couldn’t have this young girl follow after your footsteps towards a path that was possibly leading you to an early grave, not with your immaturity.

“No. Not pretty,” you chided, “Bad.”

“Bad,” she countered, shaking her head in disbelief.

Deciding herself that the conversation was over, she jumped from her seat and silenced you with an inability to listen. Now, that irritated you a *tiny* bit, and you spared one glance at your lover who refused to return the frown tugged on your lips before mimicking the angry, curious teenager. Your hands fell to your hips as she stomped towards the refrigerator and—“You better put those back! Those are for dessert, damn it!” She fished the box of Eggos from the frigid

compartment, her eyes rolling to the back of her head... a trait she unfortunately got from you. You scoffed at the audacity of this child, the floor beneath you creaking, howling, as you fully intended for her to learn just whose cabin it belonged to. Jane wasn't quite aware of her reasoning, but it certainly brought about a thrill upon finding your scowl directed at her. She found you scoffing at the audacity of her behavior at the corner of her eye, striding past Hopper who egged on her behavior with a simple, "Just let it go, she's just a kid," but you didn't *care* if she was just a kid.

Steam shot from your ears upon sighting her escape route, and you moved just as swift to block her and let out all of your frustrations you ever had with her. Since the beginning you felt an air of pretentiousness from her, knowing that she giggled and found amusement at the thought of your life going to shit. She would observe your actions, your reactions, and pick at any forms of stupidity elicited from you before frowning and judging you as if she knew anything. After but a month, her very existence brought about a migraine that never strayed far from a mind soon to deteriorate, one overwhelmed with countless equations and theories that no one beside her could force you with such a condition but you. This time, you would ensure quite a different outcome, and what better way to promise that than giving the girl exactly what she wanted?

"By the way, since you want to know so bad," you hollered, making your way towards her in your indignation, "We were about to have sex until you *fucking ruined—*"

Your words meant nothing to her once she reached the security of her bedroom, the cabin rattling ever so slightly with the force of the door shutting behind her. With a bang, the cabin fell into an uncomfortable silence, with the only sound following a high-pitched shriek and a hard kick to the door beyond your view. Once the tantrum resided, words that could describe what may or may not have been a delusion were lost in your throat, clawing at your skin as if there was a logical answer to an unknown force separating the two of you and compelling any bit of sanity in you to regret what you have said.

"Did that... Did that door just..." Your knees buckled from beneath you as splinters dug into your skin and attempted to force an apology

from you. “Close by itself? No hands? No nothing?”

Behind you, the lone wolf allowed a long, suffering sigh to escape him. “We... We need to talk.”

“Oh.”

Meanwhile, Jane spoke one word.

“Mouthbreather.”

## 5. A Roll of the Dice

### Summary for the Chapter:

“Now this don’t make any damn sense.”

### Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry for such a late update!

A hand reached out to you, palm wide in an invitation of fusing with yours with the possibility of yet another ally of Hawkins Lab coursing through its veins and exciting every nerve. Sweaty with countless of hours wasted in shrouding the interior of this laboratory in secrecy, his eyes found yours in hopes of discovering all of that within you; impossible, considering no one inside held any ounce of respect from you, and this fact was evident as you swung your hands behind your back and away from the claws of the Director of Operations. Every lab coat that passed you was sure to receive the same response, yet somehow you couldn’t walk out of that building knowing this Sam Owens remained ignorant to your dislike to him.

“I’m a big fan of your work,” he told you, “The *TI Professional*—”

You frowned at the innovation, the thought of it, yet beyond the clear windows was a defiance in erasing it from your memory. “— Yeah, whatever.”

Gushing over your achievements did not seem to be appropriate, especially considering you hadn’t almost rear-ended a student by the name of Billy Hargrove just for someone to remind you of your work. It took Hopper patting the seat next to him to remind you of the reason for your presence: Eleven, and the happenings of one Will Byers. A glance at your periphery, a sight of rows upon rows of *TI Professional* computers used for reasons beyond your control, pushed you behind towards that leather seat beside your partner in hopes of forgetting it all. Now, for the discomfort causing bumps to form along your skin, foot tapping on the carpet along with the tune of your demise, not one thought consisted of you standing and absolving yourself of such secrecy... not when the answers offered to you



would increase your understandings of what exactly is disrupting the homeostasis of Hawkins, Indiana.

“So.” Your name tumbled from his lips like vomit—not that he rambled, the thought of it just reminded you of such revolting substances. “to whom do I owe the pleasure of meeting you today?”

Your response: “The less than lovely Hop thinks you’re the perfect candidate to answer my questions.”

Your name was a melody of tumultuous agitation, explosive but strife with fatigue from doing *nothing* all morning, and he was a fool of a man to expect any response from you... especially when Jim Hopper took it upon himself to remain hidden the identity of the little girl he introduced to you that fateful morning. Eleven, that was her name—difficult to make the choice between the names when Hopper’s next words forced you to rethink life as you knew it—and she was born with psychokinetic abilities through the womb of a woman left behind by society: Terry Ives. The name struck you as familiar, as you never forgot the lips of the woman you shared a pipe of questionable substances with in your graduate school years, but not even the woman herself would recognize you now. Her face hit the pavement long ago, and everyone else kept on running, sparing their own lives of the cruelties inside Hawkins National Laboratory.

Hands reaching up to smack at your cheeks, your palms stretched at your skin and pushed your lips together as a way of saying, “Now this don’t make any damn sense.”

Hopper mimicked your actions, the lamp hanging from the cabin wall illuminating his frustrations and chose to run his hands down his face in case the wrinkles forming upon his forehead wasn’t enough for you. “Don’t play dumb, smartass.”

“I’m— *Smartass?*” You paused. “Okay, lemme just talk to the lights and ask where your sense of reality went because clearly— *Clearly* it went missing!”

Now that was uncalled for, but the existential crisis struck you at the ripe age of thirty-seven, and you were overwhelmed with thoughts that nothing else will ever make sense to you until your brain

decided to stop discerning reality from your less than imaginative tendencies. Quite unfortunate it was to breathe a sigh of relief at the mention of Project MKUltra—now that you knew, as the notion of it was no stranger to college students such as yourself. Never dabbling in sciences of that field, you lived in blissful ignorance as the world was falling apart around you, as you were more than eager at the hands of a generation moving along with technology. Your life revolved around fact and reality that you no longer wasted your energy on magic tricks or the hope that there was more to life than what was right in front of you. There was a time where you were no longer a princess in need of saving, with the world her very own castle, and it was then that you were faced with the daunting reality that your castle belonged to someone else.

The man shook his head at you, all too aware of the memory, his elbow resting on the arm of his chair. “I explained all to you, you just didn’t wanna listen.”

You scowled at him, your complexion ridden with the cement hue of the pouring rain outside. “Fake. Didn’t happen,” you swore, “... And for the record, I— Sit back down.”

Sam Owens, his stature straight and of average height, halted in his movements and threw his hands up at your command. An inch of you reminded you that you were in no position to be issuing orders, but the chance the man would be bothered by your behavior frightened you; all you desired to know was why, why such experiments were performed on an innocent life like Jane’s. What compelled Terry to give up what extraordinarily ordinary life she lived, all so the Cold War could continue and Americans could have the upper hand in a silent war that tore relationships apart and divided the nation? How cruel could one be to sacrifice the childhood of a little girl, snatch the trivialities of elementary school crushes and keep in secret the beauty of learning what the world had to offer her?

“I have... every right to be angry.” Your hands trembled, and you tucked them underneath your arms as your frustration translated through the shaking of your voice. “Am I the only one seeing how *fucked up* everything is here?” You looked to the director of the laboratory, the reason for your strife. “I wouldn’t put it past you, you probably have no soul, but Hop—” Tears threatened to reveal your

weakness, your feelings for some girl you could no longer hate. “Hop, you’re working with *them*.”

You would be lying if his inability to mirror the frown on your lips with a tiny grin, his incapacity to reassure you that everything was not as it seemed didn’t bother you. He was unable to ease your worries, instead finding the cream walls his new subject of interest; ashamed, you wished he was, yet you were more ashamed of yourself for pouring all the faith you had into him. You were without a clue of where you stood, the rush of information throwing you into a loop you had no way of recuperating from. You were somehow the Devil’s advocate, arguing what was real and what was fiction with constant what if’s. How could you function at the realization that your relationships were slowly crumbling, poking holes into what was left of the pathetic life you lived? Was this what life threw at you, all at the expense of a girl you shared similarities with?

What *were* you up against?

“Show her,” was all Jim Hopper said.

Doctor Sam Owens sent a curt nod his way, shoving his hands into the spacious pockets of his lab coat. Before you could inquire as to what other mindfuck that was to be revealed to you, Hopper followed shortly after, his lips tight with what you hoped was guilt and regret for even considering listening to what bullshit these scientists came up with. He sent a glance your way, an emotion crossing his features that you could never place... you hated it, you hated him. Your eyes would meet the back of the forest green plaid shirt he tucked into his jeans, burning with such contempt and naivety that perhaps your own feelings eluded you.

You could never hate him, despite it all.

So you hated yourself instead.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

A bit more of Readers past is revealed! Please send some kudos and perhaps comment if you can!

## 6. The Strangest of Things

### Summary for the Chapter:

Your whole world is turned upside down.

Ambivalent baby blues found a woman in their periphery, a blur of cement gray and burgundy interacting with the senses. The scent of lavender crawled up into the nostrils of the men standing centimeters apart from the source, those treading closest to the perfume intelligent enough not to indulge in it for too long. Quite a pleasant smell it was, except the flowery aura was mixed with condemning and aggravation that it no longer could bestow what mood-altering powers it was meant to offer. There was once a time where Jim Hopper relished in such a scent, finding pleasure in trailing his nose along your skin because the recipe born was intoxicating, *damning*, except never was there a time where negativity ruined it for him.

One glance beside his left shoulder caused his eyes to roll to the back of his head, his next course of action to show a touch of gratitude to the door at the end of the hallway for grappling at your attention. With your lips puckered, extending past your nose, whoever unlucky enough to brush past you was met with aggressive jostling that mirrored... a child, which was along the same caliber of your apparent immaturity. You trailed past him and the director too far for comfort despite Hopper having the ability to halt your movements by grasping at your elbow and changing his mind at a moment's notice, and you commanded the party to move forward simply by the crossing of your arms. Your sight remained still and concentrated, arms pulling at the sleeves of your vintage, fading cardigan that no longer fit the description of such a vivid burgundy as if nothing else mattered but what would undoubtedly be an obstacle to a goal that seemed improbable.

What irritated the man was not just your childish behavior—now there was no escaping from that, as much as the tendencies vexed him—but your willingness to carry with this charade of silent treatment. A man who earned the respect to have a voice, he surely could not make use of it when he needed it the most; he left you lost in a world far from your own, shoving you off a cliff of the unknown

where you were constantly descending without a reason as to why. All he asked of you was to remain still, to wait until he could find the most appropriate way to turn your world upside down and twist reality to where it was unrecognizable, and that was quite a difficult task considering he was all too aware your impatience near outmatched his. Apparently that wasn't so because the inability to even spare a glance his way was the answer he didn't want but was receiving from you anyway.

Doctor Owens' adam's apple bobbed considerably at your attitude. "What you're going to see beyond those doors is something even we can't explain."

It was a sentence anyone would stop to hear more of, but not you. "Cool. I had a kid slam the door in my face with her mind... a kid whose life you stole, but *hey*, what do I know?" This was where you plunged the knife into your questionable lover, your harsh phrases etched into his skin. "I'm just a woman who has *emotions* and *cares* about other people." That was when you twisted it... figuratively, although you couldn't help but wonder if he would feel anything.

On the contrary, the man couldn't help but wonder where exactly you got the *balls* to say such things, especially when he could see proof of your apprehension upon squinting and edging closer to you without your consent. Somehow a fraction of his brain; God only knew which one, for his times in biology were spent beneath bleachers where he could experience a personal taste on a woman's sexual organs. You might have been a rarity, braces lined across your teeth with a mechanical smile that Hopper once detested, since the smartass in you never could find the bravery to miss material you knew was significant in life. As your pace grew, your fright of what might lie beyond those doors agonizing you and pulling at your thoughts, the man recalled of a past where rubber bands pulled your hair up into twin ponytails. A grin threatened to rise at the image: books pressed close against your chest and a frown upon your lips at such an unruly public school with the logo of a more prestigious school slapped on the collar of your old uniform. To shorten a long and tedious story, one built upon years of knowing you... twenty years did not change the fact that you still could be a *bitch*.

Sometimes, he thought it was entertaining. "Don't bother. Years

won't change the fact that once she's got her mind made up, she ain't budging."

"Right-O, Chief-O," you praised, your hands wrapping around the handle of that cursed door before you reminded yourself, "O-Oh, right! Forgot I was mad at you."

Before you could waste what little time you had left to reveal the extent of your anger after the mutter under Hopper's breath, you chose to leave your energy to your forearm to crank the handle of a doorway to a world you could never describe. The creak of what followed caused the inhabitants of this space to spare a glance over their shoulder at the newcomer, all of them clad in lab coats far from what you wore when dissecting frogs in high school. Rearing your arm back, you were promptly aware of the purpose of the bolts lining the heavy steel, the gray paint contributing to a darkness inside that no one outside was to see. Your front teeth clamped on a lip growing weary of your assault, your eyes shuffling to the screens among the walls to the control panel in the center of a room safe from beyond... whatever was growing inside this laboratory.

"Ted, we got ourselves another visitor." Doctor Sam Owens clapped your shoulder, a mistake easily repaired through your inability to breathe and dwell on his gesture. "Go easy on her, is all I'm saying."

"I *told* you to call me Teddy," said Ted, his annoyance masked by secrets and an unforgivable discovery, but Ted was simply noise that dug into your skull and embedded itself in a brain that neared shutting down.

Hopper followed your gaze to the translucent, encased glass, awaiting your reaction to what horrors you remained ignorant of until now. Your eyes fell to trail upon speckles of dust floating in a world that lived aimlessly, a space comprised of vines that rooted deep into your Earth and invaded without no one knowing. The ropes riddled with rust and poison wrapped themselves around what you would no longer recognize as a... computer room, cafeteria, you would never know. Your stare lingered on the way the tendrils would expand and shrink, crawling along whatever home they built for themselves, unable to find solace in what could have been a more attractive being to look at: Jim Hopper, for example. You would never forget the way

the ominous, somber yellow caressed your cheeks, the baby pink brushing your cheekbones overshadowed by such an ugly color. Your palm would lay flat against the glass, all too aware of the chill that somehow existed beyond this existential expanse a part of you longed to explore. Yet, you would snatch that slim chance of you turning on your heels and running from it all... if only Hopper didn't make it so slim.

“What... the fuck...”

“What the ‘F’ is right, Miss,” the Director of Operations chimed in, hands fishing into his pockets to search for how to explain it all, “Kids call it the Upside—”

*“Ki-Kids?”*

Yes, kids.

One of them happened to be your favorite brat and Eggo lover.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Quick shoutout to users Dreamatorium and Celery, their comments are such a huge contender for me continuing this story! I am glad you like it, and I am really sorry for such a late update! Please leave comments, if you can :)